5.

THE RECONCILER.

AN EPISTLE PACIFICATORIE

of the ſeeming-differences of opinion concerning the trueneſſe and viſibility of the *Roman Church*.

By Ios: Exon.

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TO
THE RIGHT HO-
NOVRABLE, AND
truly religious, my ſingular
good Lord, *Edward* Earle
of *Norwich*.

My ever honored Lord:

I Confeſſe my charity led me into an error; Your Lordſhippe well knowvs how apt I am to be overtaken with theſe better deceits of an over kinde credulity. I

had thought that any dash of my pen, in a sudden, and easie advertisement, might have served to have quitted that ignorant scandall, which was cast upon my mistaken assertion, of the true visibilty of the Romane Church. The issue proves all otherwise: I finde, to my griefe, that the misunderstanding tenacitie of some zealous spirits hath made it a quarrell. It cannot but trouble me to see that the position, which is so familiarly current with the best reformed Divines; & which hath beene so oft and long since published by mee without contradiction; yea, not without the approbation and applause of the whole representative body of the Clergie of this kingdome, should now

now be quarrelled, and drawne into the deteſtation of thoſe that know it not; As one therefore that ſhould thinke it coroſive enough, that any occaſion ſhould be taken by ought of mine, to ravell but one thred of that ſeamleſs coat, I doe earneſtly deſire, by a more full explication, to give cleare ſatisfaction to all Readers; and by this ſeaſonable reconcilement, to ſtop the flood-gates of contention; I know it will not be unpleaſing to your Lordſhip, that through your honorable and pious hands, theſe welcome papers ſhould be tranſmitted to many; Wherein I ſhall firſt beſeech, yea adjure al Chriſtians, under whoſe eies they ſhall fall, by the dreadfull name of that GOD, who ſhall judge

judge both the quicke, and the dead, to lay aſide all unjuſt prejudices; and to allow the words of Truth, and Peace; I dare confidently ſay, Let us be underſtood, and we are agreed.

The ſearcher of all harts knows how far it was from my thoughts to ſpeake ought in favour of the Roman Synagogue: If I have not ſufficiently branded that Strūpet, I juſtly ſuffer. *Luthers* broad word is by me already both ſafely cōſtrued, & ſufficiently vindicated. But, doe you not ſay, It is a true viſible Church? Do you not yeeld ſome kinde of communion with theſe clients of Antichriſt? What is, if this be not, favour? Marke well, Chriſtian Reader, and the Lord give thee underſtanding in all things:

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things: To beginne with the latter; No man can ſay but the Church of Rome holds ſome Truths; thoſe truths are Gods, and in his right, ours; why ſhould not wee challenge our owne, whereſoever we finde it? If a verie Devill ſhall ſay of Chriſt, *Thou art the Sonne of the living God*, wee will ſnatch this truth out of his mouth, as uſurped; and in ſpight of him, proclaime it for our own. Indeed, there is no communion betwixt light and darkneſſe, but there is communion betwixt light and light; Now all truth is light, and therefore ſymbolizeth with it ſelfe. With that light, therefore, whoſe glimmering yet remaines in their darkneſſe, our clearer light will, and muſt hold com-

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communion ; If they profeſſe three Perſons in one Godhead ; two natures in one perſon of Chriſt ; ſhall we detrect to joine with them in this Chriſtian veritie? We abhorre to have any communion with them in their errors, in their idolatrous or ſuperſtitious practices, theſe are their owne, not ours. If we durſt have taken their part in theſe, this breach had not beene ; Now, who can but ſay that we muſt hate their evill, and allow their good ? It is no countenance to their errours that wee embrace our owne truths ; It is no diſparagement to our truths, that they have blended them with their errors : Here can be no difference, then, if this communion bee not mis-taken ; no man

man will ſay that wee may ſever from their common truths; No man will ſay that wee may joyne with them in their hatefull errours.

For the former; Hee that ſaith a theefe is truly a man, doth hee therein favour that theefe? He that ſaith, a diſeaſed, dropſied, dying bodie, is a true (though corrupt) body, doth he favour that diſeaſe, or that living carcaſſe? It is no other, no more that I ſay of the Church of Rome: Trueneſſe of being, and outward viſibility, are no praiſe to her; Yea, theſe are aggravations to her falſhood: The advantage that is both ſought and found in this aſſertion, is onely ours, as we ſhall ſee in the ſequell, without any danger of their gain.

I ſay, then, that ſhe is a true church, but, I ſay withall, ſhee is a falſe Church: True in exiſtence, but falſe in beleefe: Let not the homonymie of a word breed jarres, where the ſenſe is accorded: If we doe not yeeld her the true being of a Church, why do we call her the Church of Rome? What ſpeake we of? or where is the ſubject of our queſtion? who ſees not that there is a morall trueneſs, and a naturall? He that is morally the falſeſt man, is, in nature, as truly a man, as the honeſteſt; and therefore in this regard as true a man: In the ſame ſenſe therefore that wee ſay the Devill is a true (though falſe) ſpirit; that a cheater is a true (thogh falſe) man, we may and muſt ſay, that the Church of Rome

Rome is a true (though falſe) Church ; Certainely, there hath beene a true errour, and miſ-taking of the ſenſe that is guiltie of this quarrell. As for the viſibility, there can be no queſtion : Would God, that Church did not too much fill our eie, yea the world ; There is nothing wherein it doth more pride it ſelfe, than in a glorious conſpicuitie, ſcorning, in this regard, the obſcure paucitie of their oppoſers.

But you ſay, What is this but to play with ambiguities ; That the Church of Rome is it ſelfe, that is, a Church ; that it is viſible; that it is truly exiſtent, there can be no donbt ; but is it ſtill a part of the truly exiſtent, viſible church of Chriſt ? Surely, no otherwiſe than

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than an hereticall and Apoſtaticall Church is, and may be: Reader, whoſoever thou art, for Gods ſake, for thy ſoules ſake, marke where thou treadeſt; Elſe thou ſhalt bee ſure to fall either into an open gulfe of uncharitableneſſe, or into a dangerous precipice of errour. There is no feare, nor favour to ſay, that the Church of Rome, under a Chriſtian face, hath an Antichriſtian heart; overturning that foundation by neceſſarie inferences, which by open profeſſion it avoweth: That face, that profeſſion, thoſe avowed principles are enough to give it claime to a true outward viſibilitie of a Chriſtian Church; whiles thoſe damnable inferences are enough to feoffe it in the true ſtyle of

The church of Rome is erroneus not so much for plaine erroneous doctrines, as for inferences concluded & deduced from hir positions by others.

of hereſie, and Antichriſtianiſme; Now, this hereſie, this Antichriſtianiſme makes Rome juſtly odious, and execrable to God, to Angels, and Men; but cannot utterly diſchurch it, whiles thoſe main principles maintaine a weake life in that crazie, and corrupted bodie.

But is not this language different from that whereto our eares and eies have beene inured, from the mouthes, and pens of ſome reverend Divines and profeſſors of our Church? Know, Reader, that the ſtreame of the famous Doctors, both at home, and abroad, hath runne ſtrongly my way: I ſhould have feared, and hated to goe alone; what reaſon is there then to ſingle out one man

in a throng? Some few worthie Authors have ſpoken otherwiſe, in the warmth of their zealous contention; yet ſo, as that even to them durſt I appeale for my Iudges; for if their ſound differ from me, their ſenſe agrees with mee: that, which as I touched in my Advertiſement, ſo I am now readie to make cleare by the inſtance of learned *Zanchius*; whoſe pregnant teſtimonies compared together, ſhall plainly teach us, how eaſie a reconcilement may bee made betwixt theſe two, ſeemingly-contrarie, opinions: That worthie Author, in his profeſſion of Chriſtian Religion, which hee wrote, and publiſhed, in the 70. yeare of his age, having defined the Church of Chriſt in generall, and

The opinion of Zanchius concerning the two particular visible churches.

and paſſed thorow the properties of it, at laſt, deſcending to the ſubdiviſion of the Church militant, comes to inquire, how particular Churches may be knowne to be the true churches of Chriſt; wherof he determines thus. *Illas igitur, &c.* Thoſe Churches therefore doe wee acknowledge for the true Churches of Chriſt; in which firſt of all, the pure doctrine of the Goſpell is preached, heard, admitted, and ſo onely admitted, that there is neither place, nor eare given to the contrarie: For both theſe are the juſt propertie of the flocke or ſheepe of Chriſt; namely, both to heare the voice of their owne Paſtor, and to reject the voice of ſtrangers. *Iohn* 10. 4. In which, ſecondly, the Sacraments

instituted by Christ, are lawfully, and (as much as may bee) according to Christs institution, administred, and received; and therefore, in which the Sacraments devised by men are not admitted,

iii and allowed; In which lastly, the discipline of Christ hath the due place; that is, where both publiquely, and privately, charitable care is had, both by admonitions, corrections, and at last (if need be) by excommunications, that the Commandements of God be duly kept, and that all persons live soberly, justly, and piously, to the glorie of God, and edification of their Neighbour. Thus hee; wherein, who sees not how directly he aimes, both at the justifying of our Churches, and the ca-

caſheering of the Roman, which is palpably guiltie of the violation of theſe wholſome rules? and indeed, it muſt needs be ſaid, if we bring the Roman Church to this touch, ſhe is caſt for a meer counterfeit; ſhee is as farre from truth, as truth is from falſhood: Now by this time you goe away with an opinion that learned *Zanchie* is my profeſſed adverſarie, and hath directly condemned my poſition, of the trueneſſe, and viſibilitie of the Roman Church: Have but patience, I beſeech you, to read what the ſame excellent Author writes, in his golden Preface to that noble worke, *De natura Dei*; where this queſtion is clearly, and punctually decided: There you ſhall finde, that having paſſed

through the wofull and gloomie offuſcations of the Church of God, in all former ages, he, deſcending to the darkneſſe of the preſent Babylon, concludes thus: *Deinde non potuit Satan, &c.* Moreover, Satan could not, in the verie Roman Church, doe what he liſted, as hee had done in the Eaſterne; to bring all things to ſuch paſſe, as that it ſhould no more have the forme of a Chriſtian Church; For, in ſpight of Satan, that Church retained ſtill the chief foundations of the faith, although weakned with the doctrines of men; it retained the publique preaching of the word of God, thogh in many places miſ-underſtood, and miſ-conſtrued; the invocation of the name of Chriſt, though joyned

joyned alſo with the invocation of dead men; the adminiſtration of Baptiſme, inſtituted by Chriſt himſelfe, howſoever defiled with the addition of many ſuperſtitions. So as, together with the ſymbole of the covenant, the Covenant it ſelfe remained ſtill in her; I mean in all the Churches of the Weſt, no otherwiſe than it did in the Church of Iſrael, even after that all things were in part profaned by *Ieroboam*, and other impious, and idolatrous Kings, upon the defection made by them from the Church, and Tribe of *Iuda*; For, neither doe I aſſent to them which would have the Church of Rome to have no leſſe ceaſed to be the Church of Chriſt, than thoſe Eaſterne Churches, which

afterwards turned Mahumetan; what Church was ever more corrupt than the Church of the ten Tribes, yet we learne from the Scriptures, that it was ſtill the Church of God? And how doth Saint *Paul* call that Church, wherin Antichriſt (hee ſaith) ſhall ſit, the Temple of God? neither is it any Baptiſme at all, that is adminiſtred out of the Church of Chriſt. The wife that is an Adultereſſe, doth not ceaſe to be a wife, unleſs being deſpoiled of her mariage-ring, ſhe be manifeſtly divorced: The Church of Rome, therefore, is yet the Church of *Chriſt*; but what manner of Church? Surely ſo corrupted and depraved, and with ſo great tyrannie oppreſſed, that you can neither, with a good con-

What manner of church the church of Rome?

conſcience, partake with them, in their holy things, nor ſafely dwell amongſt them. Thus he againe; wherein you ſee hee ſpeakes as home for me, as I could deviſe to ſpeake for my ſelfe, and as appoſitely profeſſeth to oppoſe the contrarie.

Looke, now, how this learned Author may be reconciled to his owne pen; and by the verie ſame way, ſhall my pen bee reconciled with others: Either he agrees not with himſelfe, or elſe, in his ſenſe, I agree with my gainſayers: Nothing is more plaine, then that hee in that former ſpeech, and all other claſſick Authors, that ſpeake in that Key, meane, by a *True Church*, a ſound, pure, right beleeving Church; ſo as their *vera*, is ra-

Ibid. præfat. de nat. Dei.

rather *verax*: *Zanchie* explicates the terme, whiles he joines *veram & puram* together; ſo as in this conſtruction, it is no true Church that is an unſound one; as if truth of exiſtence were all one with truth of doctrine: In this ſenſe, whoſoever ſhall ſay the Church of Rome is a true Church, I ſay he calls evill good, and is no better than a teacher of lies. But, if we meaſure the true being of a viſible Church, by the direct maintenance of fundamentall principles, though by conſequences indirectly overturned, and by the poſſeſſion of the word of God, and his Sacraments, though not without foule adulteration; what judicious Chriſtian can but, with mee, ſubſcribe to learned *Zanchius*, that the

the Church of Rome hath yet the true viſibilitie of a Church of Chriſt: what ſhould I need to preſs the latitude, and multiplicity of ſenſe of the word, *Church*; there is no one term that I know, in all uſe of ſpeech, ſo various; If, in a large ſenſe, it be taken to comprehend the ſociety of all that profeſſe Chriſtian Religion, through the whole world, howſoever impured, who can denie this title to the Roman? If, in a ſtrict ſenſe, it be taken (as it is by *Zanchius* here, and all thoſe Divines who refuſe to give this ſtyle to the Synagogue of Rome) for the companie of elect faithfull men gathered into one myſticall bodie under one head, *Chriſt*, waſhed by his blood, juſtified by his merits, ſanctified by

by his Spirit, conſcionablie waiting upon the true ordinances of God, in his pure Word, and holie Sacraméts, who can be ſo ſhameleſſe, as to give this title to the Roman Church? Both theſe ſentences, then, are equally true; *The Church of Rome is yet a true Church, in the firſt ſenſe; The Church of Rome long ſince ceaſed to bee a true Church in the ſecond.* As thoſe friendly ſouldiers therefore, of old, ſaid to their fellowes (μὴ μαχώμεθα) why fight we? Stay, ſtay, deare brethren, for Gods ſake, for his Churches ſake, for your ſoules ſake, ſtay theſe buſie and unprofitable litigations; put up, on both ſides, your angrie pens; Turne your Swords into Sithes, to cut downe the ranke corruptiõs of the Roman church; and

and your Speares into Mattockes, to beat downe the walls of this myſticall Babylon; There are enemies enow abroad, Let us bee friends at home; But if our ſenſe be the ſame, you will aske, why our termes varie, and why wee have choſen to fall upon that maner of expreſſion, which gives advantage to the Adverſarie, offence to our owne? Chriſtian Reader, let me beſeech thee, in the bowels of Chriſt, to weigh well this matter, and then tell me why ſuch offence, ſuch advantage ſhould bee rather given by my words, than by the ſame words, in the mouth of *Luther*, of *Calvin*, of *Zanchie*, *Iunius*, *Pleſſee*, *Hooker*, *Andrewes*, *Field*, *Crakenthorpe*, *Bedel*, and that whole cloud of learned and pi-

ous

ous Authors, who have, without exceptió, uſed the ſame language? And why more by my words, now, than twentie yeares agoe, at which time I publiſhed the ſame truth, in a more ful and liberall expreſſion. VViſe and charitable Chriſtians may not be apt to take offence where none is given. As for anie advantage that is hereby given to the Adverſaries, they may put it in their eye, and ſee never the worſe. Loe, ſay they, we are of the true viſible Church; this is enough for us; why are we forſaken, why are we perſecuted, why are we ſolicited to a change? Alas, poore ſoules, doe they not know, that Hypocrites, leud perſons, reprobates, are no leſſe members of the true viſible Church? what

what gaine they by this but a deeper damnation? To what purpoſe did the Iewes crie, *The Temple of the Lord*, whiles they deſpighted the Lord of that Temple? Is the ſea-weed ever the leſſe vile, becauſe it is dragd up together with good fiſh? They are of the viſible Church, ſuch as it is; what is this but to ſay, they are neither Iewes, nor Turkes, nor Pagans; but miſbeleevers, damnablie hereticall in opinion, ſhamefullie idolatrous in practice; Let them make their beſt of this juſt Elogie; and triumph in this ſtyle; may we never proſper if we envie them this glorie: Our care ſhall be, that, beſides the Church ſenſible, (as *Zuinglius* diſtinguiſheth) we may be of the Church ſpirituall; and not reſting

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in a fruitleſſe viſibilitie, wee may finde our ſelves livelie limbes of the myſtical body of *Chriſt*; which onelie condition ſhall give us a true right to heaven; whiles faſhionable profeſſion, in vain cries, *Lord, Lord*, and is barred out of thoſe bleſſed gates, with an, *I know you not*.

Neither may the Reader think, that I affect to goe by-waies of ſpeech: no, I had not taken this path, unleſſe I had found it both more beaten, and fairer: I am not ſo unwiſe, to teach the Adverſarie what diſadvantage I conceive to be given to our moſt juſt cauſe, by the other manner of explication. Let it ſuffice to ſay, that this form of defence more fully ſtops the adverſaries mouth in thoſe two maine

maine and envious ſcandals, which hee caſts upon our holy Religion, Defection from the Church, and Innovation; than which, no ſuggeſtion hath wont to bee more prevalent with weake, and ungrounded hearts, what wee further win by this, not more charitable, than ſafe *Tenet*, I had rather it ſhould be ſilently conceived by the judicious, then blazoned by my free penne; ſhortly, in this ſtate of the queſtion, our gaine is as cleare, as the Adverſaries loſſe: our ancient Truth triumphes over their upſtart errours, our charitie over their mercileſſe preſumptions; Feare not therefore, deare brethen, where there is

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no roome for danger; Suſpect not fraud where there is nothing but plaine, honeſt, ſimplicitie of intentions; cenſure not where there is the ſame Truth, clad in a different, but more eaſie habite of words; But if any mans fervent zeale ſhall rather draw him to the liking of that other, rougher, and harder way, ſo as in the meane time he keepe within the bounds of Chriſtian charitie, I taxe him not; let everie man abound in his owne ſenſe; Onely let our hearts, and tongues, and hands, conſpire together in peace with our ſelves, in warre with our common enemies.

Thus farre have I (Right Honou-

nourable) in a deſire of peace, poured out my ſelfe into a plaine explication, and eaſie accordance: Thoſe whom I ſtrive to ſatisfie, are onely miſ-takers; whoſe cenſures, if ſome man would have either laught out, or deſpiſed, yet I have condeſcended to take off by a ſerious deprecation, and juſt defence.

It is an unreaſonable motion to requeſt mindes prepoſſeſſed with prejudice to heare reaſon; Whole Volumes are nothing to ſuch as have contented themſelves onely to take up opinions upon truſt, and will hold them, becauſe they know where they had them: In vaine ſhould I ſpend my ſelfe in beating up-

on ſuch anviles; but for thoſe ingenuous Chriſtians, which will hold an eare open for juſtice, and truth, I have ſaid enough, if ought at all needed.

Alas, my Lord, I ſee and grieve to ſee it; It is my Rochet that hath offended, and not I; In another habit, I, long ſince, publiſhed this, and more, without diſlike; It is this colour of innocence that hath bleared ſome over-tender eyes; Wherein I know not whether I ſhould more pittie their errour, or applaud my owne ſufferings; although I may not ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *What hath the righteous done?* Let mee (I beſeech your Lordſhip) upon this occaſion, have

have leave to give a little vent to my just griefe in this point.

The other day I fell upon a Latine Pamphlet, homely for style, tedious for length, zealously uncharitable for stuffe, wherein the Author (onely wise in this, that hee would bee unknowne) in a grave fiercenesse flies in the face of our English Prelacie; not so much inveighing against their persons, (which hee could bee content to reverence) as their verie places. I blest my selfe to see the case so altered: Heretofore, the Person had wont to beare off manie blowes from the function; now the verie function wounds the person: In what case are wee,

That none of vice of function is blamed

Puritans are Ærians.

when that which ſhould command reſpect, brands us? What blacke Art hath raiſed up this ſpirit of *Ærius* from his pit? Wo is mee, that zeale ſhould breed ſuch monſters of conceit: It is the honour, the pompe, the wealth, the pleaſure (hee ſaith) of the Epiſcopall Chaire that is guiltie of the depravation of our Calling; and if himſelfe were ſo overlayd with greatneſſe, hee ſhould ſuſpect his owne fidelitie. Alas, poore man, at what diſtance doth hee ſee us? Foggie Ayre uſeth to repreſent everie object farre bigger than it is. Our SAVIOVR in his temptation upon the Mount, had onely the glorie of thoſe Kingdomes

domes ſhowed to him, by that ſubtile Spirit, not the cares, and vexations; Right ſo are our dignities exhibited to theſe envious beholders; Little doe theſe men ſee the toyles, and anxieties that attend this ſuppoſedly-pleaſing eminence.

All the revenge that I would wiſh to this uncharitable Cenſurer, ſhould bee this, that hee might bee but for a while adjudged to this ſo glorious ſeate of mine; that ſo his experience might taſte the bewitching pleaſures of this envied greatneſſe; hee ſhould well finde more danger of being over ſpent with worke, than of languiſhing with eaſe and delicacie.

For mee I need not appeale to Heaven: Eyes enow can witneſſe how few free houres I have enjoyed, ſince I put on theſe Robes of ſacred honour. In ſo much as I could finde in my heart, with holy *Gregorie*, to complaine of my change; were it not, that I ſee theſe publique troubles are ſo many acceptable ſervices to my GOD, whoſe glorie is the end of my being: Certainly, my Lord, if none but earthly reſpects ſhould ſway me, I ſhould heartily wiſh to change this Pallace (which the Providence of GOD, and the bountie of my gracious Soveraigne hath put mee into) for my quiet Cell at *Waltham*, where I had ſo

ſo ſweet leaſure to enjoy God, your Lordſhip, and my ſelfe: But I have followed the calling of my GOD, to whoſe ſervice I am willingly ſacrificed; and muſt now, in an holy obedience to his Divine Majeſtie, with what cheerefulneſſe I may, ride out all the ſtormes of envie, which unavoidably will alight upon the leaſt appearance of a conceived greatneſſe; in the meane time, what ever I may ſeeme to others, I was never leſs in my owne apprehenſions; and, were it not for this attendance of envie, could not yeeld my ſelfe any whit greater than I was; what ever I am, that good God of mine, make mee faithfull to him;

him; and compoſe the unquiet ſpirits of men, to a conſcionable care of the publique peace; with which prayer, together with the apprecation of all happineſſe to your Lordſhip, and all yours, I take leave and am

Your Lordſhips truly devoted in all hearty obſervance and dutie,

Ios. Exon.

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